

The Department of Defense 1947–1997

Organization and Leaders



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FOREWORD

The past half century has been an age of historic events and forces that have reshaped the world. This constantly changing, unstable world, full of accidents, violence, and the unexpected, at the same time is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before. The United States must be constantly alert, for any change in one part of the world may be viewed as a potential threat to the whole. In such a world, high priority for the nation's security is paramount.

During this same half century the evolution of the Department of Defense has been shaped by its response to the volatile dynamics of the domestic and international scenes. Guided by the policies and decisions of our civilian and military leaders, the four military services—Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps—and the unified combatant commands that have the ultimate fighting responsibility are the principal guarantors of our security. On this fiftieth anniversary of the Department of Defense it is fitting that we recognize our vital military establishment and the men and women of the armed forces who have served us so well and are so deserving of the respect and gratitude of the nation.

William S. For

PREFACE

The Department of Defense is the largest U.S. governmental institution and the ultimate protector of the nation's survival. In its first 50 years it has engaged in wars in Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf area. It has protected U.S. interests in a host of political and military crises—Berlin, Taiwan, Lebanon, Cuba, Grenada, Panama. It has participated in peacekeeping in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and other areas. It has rendered humanitarian assistance to nations and peoples around the globe, including the United States. Most important of all, it carried through the U.S. policy of containment successfully during the Cold War, preserving peaceful coexistence with the Soviet bloc through nuclear and conventional military power and thus helping to bring the Cold War to an end. The Department of Defense has been a "can do" institution that has always responded to the varied challenges of its complex mission.

The Department of Defense dates from 17 September 1947 when the first secretary of defense, James V. Forrestal, was sworn into office. For the first two years of existence after its creation by the National Security Act of 1947, it was known as the National Military Establishment. The act created a new overall U.S. national security structure, with the National Security Council at the apex and including the National Military Establishment, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Resources Board. The National Military Establishment, headed by the secretary of defense, included three military departments—Army, Navy, and Air Force —as well as the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other elements. It is clear that the military establishment received special and detailed attention in this legislation because of its important role in making and executing national security policy. The changes in military organization prescribed

in the act were intended to bring about unification of the armed forces through more centralized direction, stronger cohesion, and greater joint effort and mutual support. Amendments to the act in 1949 changed the name to Department of Defense, thereby establishing it as an executive department. After 50 years this national security structure remains essentially intact.

This volume examines the establishment and development of the higher organization of the Department of Defense from 1947 to 1997 and the role of the men who exercised top leadership—the secretaries of defense. Many of the inherent problems of the department over the years had to do with organizational relationships that had to be altered by executive or legislative action. This involved particularly the relationship between the secretary of defense and the military services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Major trends included the increase in centralization of power in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the deployment of all operational forces to the strengthened unified combatant commands, the enlarged role of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the growth in the number of Defense agencies, and some diminution of power and influence of the military services. A constant throughout the years has been the competition between the services for money, weapons, people, and missions. All of these trends and, indeed, the overall functioning of the department, have been greatly affected by the official and personal interplay between the leaders. It is often said that people, not structure, are the determinant of an organization's success or failure. The experience of the Department of Defense indicates that both able people and sound organizational structure are essential to the effective functioning of an institution.

The 20 secretaries of defense between 1947 and 1997, serving as "principal assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department of Defense," molded events and shaped policies of great national and international consequence. Their records are diverse owing to differences of personality, philosophy, and circumstance, but they have in all instances occupied a position of crucial importance to U.S. national security.

Documentation of the two parts of this volume differs. Part I has reference notes that appear at the end of the volume. Part II is supported by a bibliography which lists all of the main sources, notably the *Public Statements of the Secretary of Defense* for the period 1947-1996.

This study has benefited greatly from the thorough and cogent critiques of successive drafts by Stuart Rochester, Ronald Landa, and John Glennon. They performed an invaluable service with generous patience and forbearance and at full speed. Ronald Landa over-

saw the preparation for publication of all aspects of the work with his usual skill, initiative, and concentration. Ruth Sharma who typed and helped edit the manuscript contributed her accustomed high-quality effort and work to the final product. Alice Cole helped prepare the appendixes and Carolyn Thorne typed them in final form. Walter Poole of the Joint Staff Historical Office reviewed the section on Unified Combatant Commands and suggested needed changes. Kathleen Brassell of the OSD Graphics and Presentation Division advised on the concept of the design of the book and provided assistance in preparation of graphics. For photographs we are indebted to the following: U.S. Senate Historical Office (Pictorial Services), Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Joint Staff Historical Office, Naval Historical Center, and Director of Marine Corps History and Museums. Many pictures came from the collection of the OSD Historical Office.

> Roger R. Trask Alfred Goldberg

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